

Marine Corps Combat Development Command

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Enlisted-to-Officer Commissioning Programs Final Report

9 August 2010

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Executive Summary

The enlisted to officer commissioning programs study assesses the relative effectiveness and efficiency of three enlisted-to-officer programs – the Enlisted Commissioning Program (ECP); the Meritorious Commissioning Program (MCP); and the Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program (MECEP). Additionally, this study recommends changes in the program in terms of administration and screening criteria for admission. This analysis shows that 2nd Lieutenant and 1st Lieutenant Graduates of MCP and MECEP programs outperform ECP graduates in the operating forces based upon Fitness Report scores. Both Reporting Seniors and Reviewing Officers score the MCP and MECEP programs higher than ECP at these grades. However, once the Marines are promoted to the rank of Captain, performance of the Marines from the three programs becomes relatively equal. Efficiency of the programs was also assessed in this analysis and shows that the ECP program is the most efficient of these three programs in terms of both cost and risk to the Marine Corps. MECEP was assessed to be the least efficient of the three programs in terms of risk and cost. In order to mitigate some of the risk associated with MECEP, this analysis recommends programmatic changes and more stringent screening criteria in order to possibly reduce risk of attrition and decrease the training cycle required to commission a MECEP Marine. This analysis ultimately recommends that MCP and MECEP should be merged into a single program in order to eliminate some redundancy in the programs. Additionally this analysis validates the need to eliminate the MECEP preparatory school based upon the establishment of prior college experience for future MECEP applicants as well as the overall cost of preparatory school.



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1 Enlisted-to-Officer Programs

1.1 Study Objective

The objective of this study is to assess the relative effectiveness and efficiency of three enlisted-to-officer programs – the Enlisted Commissioning Program (ECP); the Meritorious Commissioning Program (MCP); and the Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program (MECEP). Additionally, this study recommends changes to the programs' administration and screening criteria for admission.

1.2 Study Methodology

The Marine Corps goal is to obtain commissioned officers of the highest leadership potential. This study, however, will not assess leadership potential. For the purposes of this study, program effectiveness will be determined by analyzing quantitative, measurable characteristics that have been recorded on candidates who have entered the programs and commissioned officers who have completed the programs. Furthermore, program efficiency will be determined by appraising qualitative and quantitative aspects of program requirements, program administration, and non-financial resource expenditure.

Effectiveness was defined by an officer's effectiveness in the fleet, e.g., if a Marine successfully completed an enlisted-to-officer accession program, how well did that particular officer perform in the fleet compared to his or her peers. The effectiveness of the program was measured by using fitness report (FITREP) data derived from each Marine's Master Brief Sheet (MBS).

In theory, if the enlisted-to-officer programs were equally effective, with measurable results as defined by officer FITREP data, then the least efficient program should be adapted or eliminated. However, if the programs had dissimilar levels of effectiveness, then it would become a question of cost-effectiveness for the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC).

1.3 Constraints and Assumptions

1.3.1 Constraints

This study was constrained to focusing on the enlisted-to-officer programs from fiscal year 2000 (FY00) until present due to the lack of data in prior years. Additionally, the population of the Marine Corps' enlisted-to-officer programs prior to FY00 could be very different compared to the population of the past decade. Furthermore, participants of the Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training (BOOST) program were excluded from this study. The Marines who participated in, and successfully completed, the BOOST program automatically became MECEP participants. However, BOOST was canceled on 15 April 2009¹; therefore, in order to study those selected from MECEP directly from the operating forces the BOOST selectees had to be removed from the total population.

1.3.2 Assumptions

Three major assumptions were taken into consideration:

- The ECP program would not be greatly affected by the results of this study because the program presents very little cost to the Marine Corps as participants already have their

¹ All Marines Message (ALMAR) 009/09



bachelor's degree prior to entering the program; thus, the cost to run this program is small compared to the rest of the enlisted-to-officer accession programs.

- MCRC will continue to accept credits and degrees from online institutions and from undergraduate programs that are conducted on base.
- The Marine Corps will continue to receive approximately 10% of its officer corps through enlisted-to-officer accession programs. This assumption greatly affects the screening process for programs such as MECEP and MCP. Should MCRC adapt the screening criteria for these programs, such as those established in Marine Administrative Message (MARADMIN) 213/10, then there will be a drop in the number of applicants who meet the minimum entrance criteria.

1.4 Background

MCRC administers three officer accession programs: ECP, MCP, and MECEP. The Marine Corps has a proud tradition of drawing commissioned officers from its enlisted ranks. According to The Unofficial Dictionary for Marines, compiled and edited by Glenn B. Knight, a *Mustang* is "a commissioned officer who served previously as an enlisted person." The Marine Corps Mustang Association web page² states that, "Since sometime before 1935, the term "Mustang" has been used by the United States Sea Services to denote enlisted men who worked their way up the ranks to officer status. Now, of course, women Marine officers with prior Marine Corps enlisted service are also Mustangs." The web page also quotes Gen Alfred M. Gray, a Mustang who rose from the rank of private to serve as the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), as saying:

"There is no honor greater than to be called "Mustang." You have long epitomized the warrior virtues of courage, devotion to duty, sacrifice, and imaginative leadership."

It is a MCRC's responsibility to ensure that enlisted-to-officer programs effectively and efficiently contribute to obtaining commissioned officers of the highest leadership potential.

1.5 ECP

ECP is a commissioning program for Marines who have earned a four-year degree before joining the Corps or during active duty. ECP-selected Marines attend Officer Candidate School (OCS), receive a commission upon graduation, and then attend The Basic School (TBS)³. To be eligible for the program, Marines must be at least 21 years old, but not older than 30. Based on MCO 1043.43A, ECP Marines must possess one of the following aptitude test scores:

- Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT): Minimum combined math and verbal score of 1000
- American College Test (ACT): Minimum combined math and english score of 45
- Armed Forces Classification Test (AFCT): A minimum converted score of 115 on the Electrical Composite (EL)

MARADMIN 234/03 (dated 15 May 2003) further modifies the ECP process. It states:

² <http://www.marinecorpsmustang.org/>

³ According to the eligibility criteria in Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1040.43A, dated 2 May 2000



"An Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score of 74 or higher will replace use of an Electrical Component (EL) score as an alternative means of determining mental aptitude for officer programs."

In addition, on 20 November 2006, MCRC issued a Frost Call that stated:

"Effective the date of this Frost Call, MCRC will use a composite 22 ACT score to mentally qualify applicants for all commissioning programs."

1.6 MCP

MCP is a commissioning program for Marines who have 75 semester credit hours or an associate's degree. Normally 124 to 128 semester hours are required for a bachelor's degree and 60 to 64 semester hours are required for an associate's degree. As for MCP, MCO 1040.43A sets forth the following eligibility criteria: Qualified Marines attend OCS, receive a commission upon graduation, and then attend TBS. It is the responsibility of the newly commissioned second lieutenant to finish college in his or her off time while serving full time as a Marine Corps officer. To be eligible for the program Marines must be at least 21 years old, but not older than 30. MCP Marines must possess one of the following aptitude test scores:

- SAT: Minimum combined math and verbal score of 1000
- ACT: Minimum combined math and English score of 45
- AFCT: A minimum converted EL score of 115

The 20 November 2006 Frost Call and MARADMIN 234/03 applies to the MCP as well as the ECP for ACT and AFQT scores. In addition, MARADMIN 278/02, dated 2 May 2002, further modifies the MCP process. It states:

"Beginning 1 January 2003, Marines entering the MCP will require 75 completed college credits and a letter of acceptance from a Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps [NROTC] affiliated college that certifies the Marine can complete a baccalaureate degree within an 18-month period. Marines accepted for the MCP will complete a 10-week class at Officer Candidates School (OCS) then attend college full-time for up to 18 months to complete their baccalaureate degrees. Marines will draw full pay and allowances while attending college but are responsible for their own expenses for tuition, books, and fees. Eligible Marines can use Montgomery GI Bill benefits to defray tuition expenses. Marines will be commissioned upon completion of their baccalaureate degree and then assigned to The Basic School."

1.7 MECEP

MECEP is a commissioning program for Marines with little or no college. Most Marines accepted for MECEP go to the MECEP Preparatory School and then attend a college offering an NROTC program. In the past, Marines who have at least 24 hours of college credit or a 1200 or better on the combined math and verbal portions of the SAT do not attend the MECEP Preparatory School. Marines enrolled in MECEP attend OCS during a summer while enrolled in college. As with MCP, Marines will draw full pay and allowances while attending college but are responsible for their own expenses for tuition, books, and fees. Eligible Marines can use Montgomery GI Bill and the Post 9/11 GI Bill to defray tuition expenses. Marines will be commissioned upon completion of their baccalaureate degree and then be assigned to



TBS. MCO 1560.15L, dated 16 August 1994, sets forth the following eligibility criteria; if selected, Marines must be:

- A corporal or above
- At least 20 but not have reached 26 years of age by the projected beginning date of college
- Must possess an SAT minimum combined score of 1000 (math and critical reading with a minimum verbal category score of 400 from the same test)
- Must be a high school graduate. Non high school graduates must have completed a minimum of three years of high school and have successfully passed the General Educational Development (GED) tests with a minimum score of 75 percent in each of the five areas.

Throughout the past 10 years, the MARADMINs soliciting applicants for the MECEP program have changed program entry requirements. Many times these requirements allowed for more Marines to become eligible for the program. MARADMIN 248/09, dated 14 April 2009, modified the MECEP process to create what is arguably considered the least stringent entry requirements. MARADMIN 248/09 stated the following minimum entry requirements:

- Unless waived, all Marines accepted for MECEP must attend the MECEP Preparatory School
- The Marine must have served a minimum of one year of active service
- There is no minimum pay grade
- The Marine must have achieved a minimum combined score of 74 or higher on their Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT); a minimum combined math and critical reading score of 1000 or higher on the SAT; or a minimum composite score of 22 on the ACT

However, a combination of issues with the MECEP population in FY09, combined with a decline in growth of the officer corps, has influenced MCRC to create tighter MECEP screening criteria. MARADMIN 213/10, dated 8 April 2010, created more stringent screening criteria for the MECEP program. MARADMIN 213/10 states the following minimum entry requirements:

- MECEP Preparatory School will no longer be offered
- Marines must have served a minimum of three years of active service
- Marines must have a minimum pay grade of sergeant
- Marines must have a minimum of 12 college credit hours
- Marines must be at least 20 years old, but not have reached 26 years of age by the projected beginning date of college if selected
- Marines must have a minimum combined score of 74 or higher on their AFQT; a minimum combined math and critical reading score of 1000 or higher on the SAT; or a minimum composite score of 22 on the ACT



2 Study Tasks

2.1 Assess Efficiency

The study team gauged relative efficiency of the three enlisted-to-officer programs by 1) reading, reviewing, and summarizing applicable orders, bulletins, and other documentation relative to the programs, such as studies conducted by the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), and 2) interviewing personnel involved in administering the programs. The appraisal compares, contrasts, and ranks the three programs according to efficiency. Efficiency was defined in terms of length of time that a Marine would be out of the Operating Forces and in training prior to attending TBS, average attrition rates, risk to the Marine Corps should an officer candidate attrite, and the cost of the overall program. All of these characteristics were then compared between the programs in order to assess the overall efficiencies of the programs.

From MCRC's perspective, in terms of efficiency, ECP is considered to be the most efficient enlisted-to-officer program (Figure 2-1). There are very few drawbacks to the program in that all ECP applicants already possess their bachelor's degree. This translates to very short Transients, Trainees, Prisoners, and Patients (T2P2) cycle because applicants do not have to attend college in order to obtain their commission. The only time ECP Marines are out of the operating forces is the 10-week OCS cycle and the subsequent time spent in TBS and military occupational specialty (MOS) school. However, since the time in TBS and MOS schools is common amongst all officers, it is considered a non-discriminator between programs. Since the time spent at OCS is the only time out of the fleet, then the overall cost to the Marine Corps is relatively low compared to MCP and MECEP. Marines are paid while they attend OCS; however, the expense to the Corps is incurred only for that 10-week duration. Should a Marine attrite from ECP then they may return to the fleet with very little damage done to their career. If a Marine returns to the fleet, then the only time lost is that 10-week period. Since, the investment in that 10-week program is low in terms of cost then the risk is relatively low as well.

MECEP, however, is the least efficient program compared to MCP and ECP. The overall cost of the program is relatively high compared to the other programs. Marines participating in this program are generally sergeants or above and are paid their salaries and housing allowances while enrolled in the program. Since this program can extend to three years or more, it is by far the most costly. Additionally, MECEP is also the highest risk program both in terms of cost risk and the risk associated with manpower losses. Marines enrolled in the MECEP program generally attrite during Officer Candidate School or after their first year of college. Since those who attrite from MECEP do so after their first year, then this represents the highest cost risk as the Marine Corps has already paid salary and benefits to the attritted Marine. The sunk costs associated with the MECEP program can add up to a substantial loss due to an average attrition rate of 15% per MECEP class⁴. Additionally, the manpower risk the Marine Corps assumes with MECEP is greater than that of either ECP or MCP. Should a Marine attrite from ECP during OCS there is very little detriment caused to that Marine's career. However, if a Marine attrites from MECEP, then it negatively impacts that Marine's career due to the amount of time he or she was out of their MOS and the reason they attritted.

⁴ Data derived from the Officer Program management Information System (OPMIS) database dating from 2000 until present.



In terms of efficiency, the cost risk and manpower risk of MCP falls between ECP and MECEP; this is due to the length of the training cycle, which includes a 10-week OCS session and up to 18 months of school. Marines are paid their salaries and benefits while enrolled in school as well. However, since it is a shorter program compared to MECEP, MCP does have the same amount of risk associated with it. While this program may be more efficient compared to MECEP, very few Marines actually qualify for MCP due to the associate's degree requirement. In fact, with the changes that occurred in the programs structure via MARADMIN⁵, this program begins to appear very much like MECEP and could be viewed as a less time intensive version of MECEP.

	ECP	MCP	MECEP
Average Participants per FY	52	15	117
Degree Requirement	Bachelors	Associates	None
Time out of Fleet	10 weeks for OCS	10 weeks plus 18 months	3-4 years
Cost to the Marine Corps	Low	Medium	High
Risk	Low	Medium	High
Reward	See Effectiveness		

Figure 2-1: Efficiencies of ECP, MCP, and MECEP

2.2 Assess Effectiveness

In terms of overall performance of the programs, FITREP data was collected on each individual who completed an enlisted to officer program since the year 2000. The data collected was then analyzed in terms of performance rated by both the Reviewing Officer (RO) and Reporting Senior (RS). Each Marine was given an aggregate score based upon all of their individual FITREPs. The scores of the individuals were then collected and grouped by commissioning program and fiscal year commissioned.

2.2.1 Reporting Senior Scores

The metric used to assess performance by the RS, which is usually the Marine officer directly in charge of the Marine Reported On (MRO), was the relative value. The relative value of a report reflects how the average of observed attributes on an individual report compares to both the RS's average of observed attributes for all reports written by the RS on Marines of the same grade, and the highest value of observed attributes on any report written by the RS on a Marine of the same grade as the MRO⁶. The

⁵ MARADMIN 278/02

⁶ Marine Corps Order P1610.7F



relative value of each MRO's report was then weighted for time. The time weighting of the reports assists in smoothing data irregularities. If an average relative value not weighted for time was used, then in theory, a poor report of three months could bear the same weight as a good report for 12 months, which would be an inaccurate assessment of how well an individual may have performed over the entire reporting period. Each MRO's average RV was then grouped by commissioning program and later grouped by commissioning program and commissioning year.

$$MRO \text{ Average } RV = \frac{\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (RV \text{ of Report} * \text{Report duration in Months})}{\sum \text{Observed Months}}$$

Using a t-test, it was determined that there was a statistically significant difference between ECP and MECEP officer's performance in the fleet as second lieutenants and as first lieutenants. Additionally, there was a statistically significant difference between the MCP and ECP Marines serving in the FMF as second and first lieutenants. In both cases, MCP and MECEP lieutenants outperformed ECP lieutenants. While this is an important point to note, it should also be mentioned that all these programs average relative value was above 90 (Figure 2-1 and Figure 2-2). This is important to note because relative value is based on a scale of 80 to 100, with 90 being the mean. All of these programs exceeded the average score of 90, which indicates that these Marines were outperforming the rest of the officer population as second and first lieutenants. While MCP and MECEP lieutenants outperformed ECP lieutenants, all three of the programs produced lieutenants that exceeded the average relative value of the rest of the commissioning programs lieutenants.

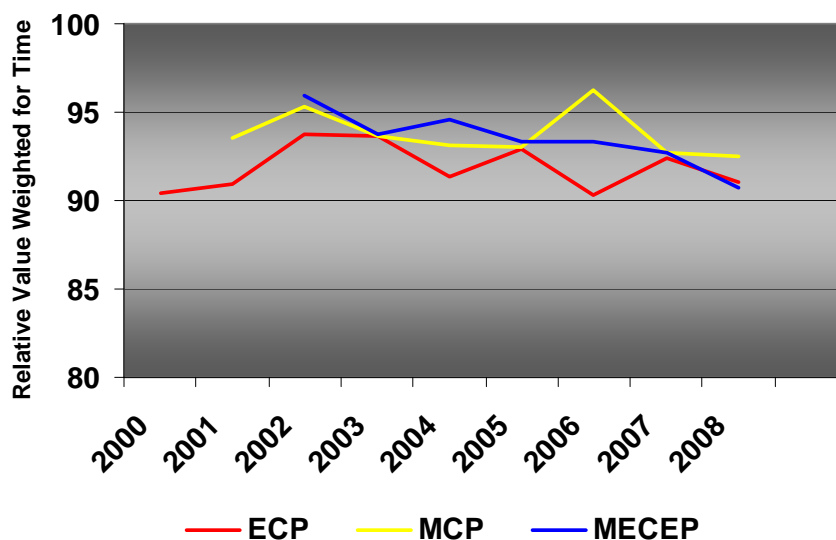


Figure 2-2: RS Comparison by Commissioning Year

Captains presented a different story compared to the second and first lieutenants. There was no statistically significant difference between the performances of these programs when the MROs are promoted to captains. This indicates that the experience an MCP or MECEP Marine may have gained in



the FMF prior to being commissioned may have boosted their performance as lieutenants, but their performance became equal once the population was promoted to captain (Figure 2-3).

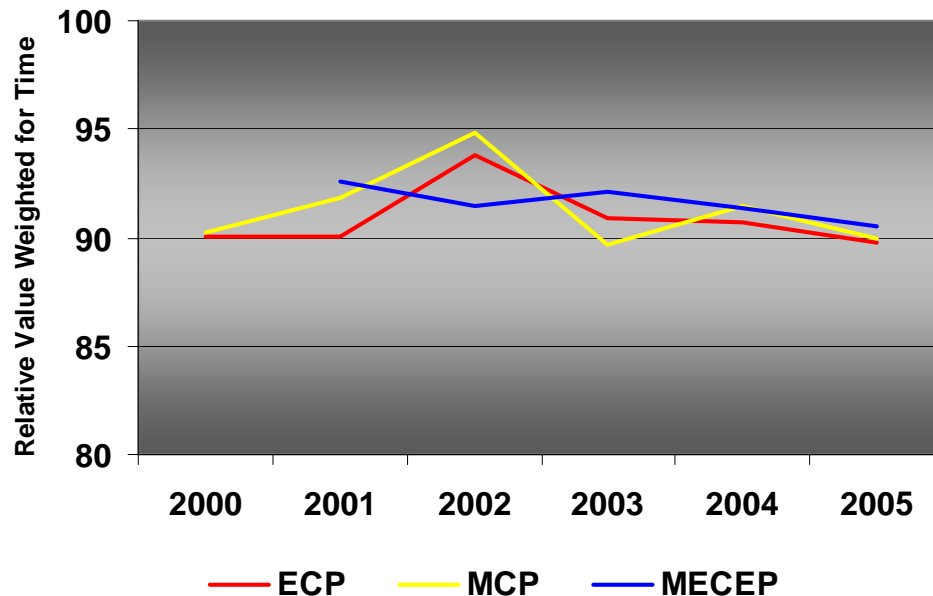


Figure 2-3: RS Comparison by Commissioning Year

2.2.2 Reviewing Officer Scores

The metric used to assess RO scores, which is usually the person directly in charge of the RS, was the percentile that each MRO's report fell into on the RO's Comparative Assessment. RO scores differ in comparison to the RS because the RO only has one single scoring mechanism compared to the numerous marks an RS uses to evaluate performance. The Christmas tree reflects where an MRO falls in comparison to their peers by placing them into one of eight different categories. Like RS scores, MRO performance is compared to his or her peers who were also evaluated by the RO. In order to determine how well an MRO performed from the RO's point of view, the study team took the MBS data from the Marine Corps Personnel Management Support Branch (MMSB) from each Marine who had completed an enlisted-to-officer program since 2000. The individual MRO's marks from the RO were compared to that of the RO's profile and a percentile was calculated for the report. An average RO percentile for each MRO was based on this data. This data was then combined in the same manner as the RS scores – by commissioning source, year, and rank.

The results of the RO analysis yielded similar results to that of the RS score analysis. For both second and first lieutenants, MCP and MECEP out performed ECP. Additionally, captains in all three programs performed at the same level of proficiency compared to each other. These results are based on a t-test comparing the different populations and their respective RO percentiles. The resultant graphs are depicted in Figure 2-4, Figure 2-5, and Figure 2-6.

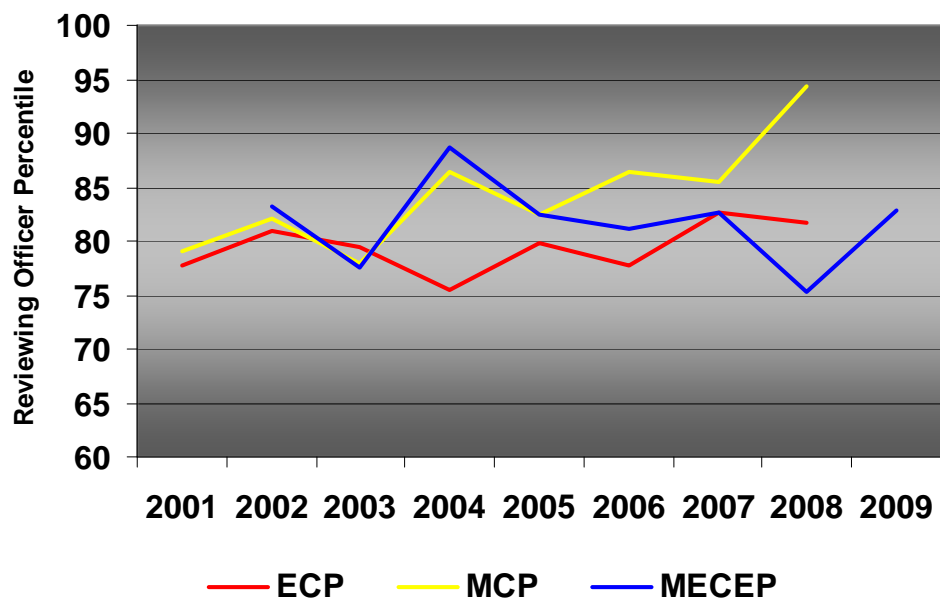


Figure 2-4: RO percentiles for Second Lieutenants

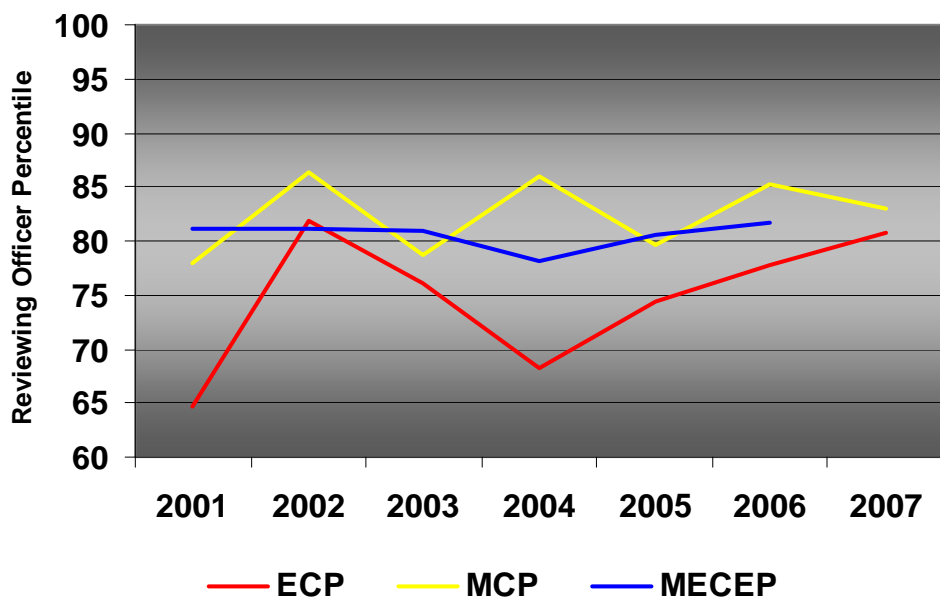


Figure 2-5: RO Percentiles for First Lieutenants

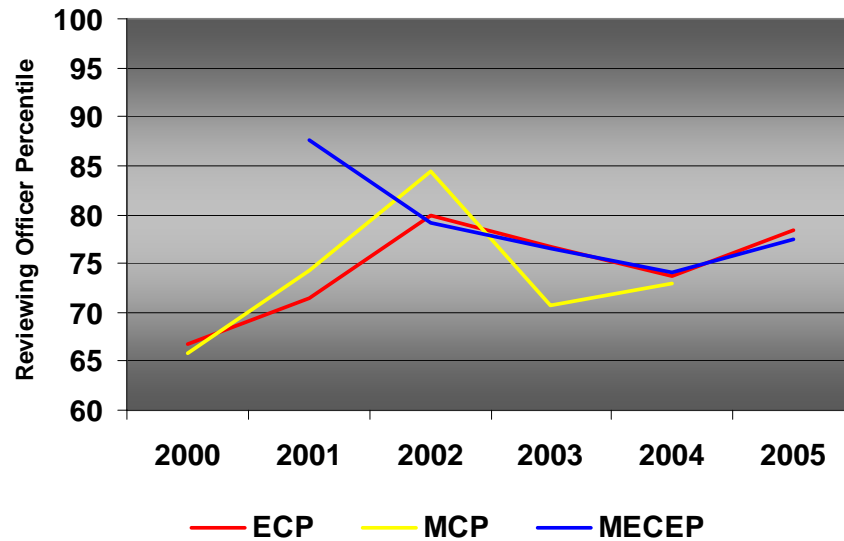


Figure 2-6: RO percentiles for Captains

2.3 Screening Criteria

In addition to determining the overall effectiveness and efficiencies of the three enlisted-to-officer commissioning programs, MCRC requested that the analysis team assist in determining revised screening criteria for the MECEP program. In order to determine appropriate screening criteria for MECEP candidates, the analysis team had to use four different databases: The Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System (MCRISS), Officer Programs Management Information System (OPMIS), Marine Corps Total Force Structure (MCTFS), and a database constructed at MCRC to assist MECEP boards in selecting participants. This last database is a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet constructed by each board that breaks down each individual by selection criteria established via MARADMIN and MCO 1560.15L. This excel spreadsheet is then combined with previous years' sheets and saved in to a single excel workbook maintained by MCRC. Fields such as physical fitness test (PFT) score, prior college credits, number and reason for non judicial punishments (NJPs), SAT and ACT scores are all manually entered for each individual applying for each year's specific board. These databases were then combined into a single database in order to determine characteristics of individuals who actually entered the program. The OPMIS database was used in order to determine those who attrited vs. those who were commissioned. Data from MCFTS, MCRISS, and the selection databases were then used to determine the most statistically significant characteristics that would cause someone to attrite or earn a commission. The following graph, Figure 2-7, presents the top five screening criteria in order of significance based on the chi-squared statistic from top to bottom. The left side of the graph indicates the screening criteria, and the x-axis of the graph illustrates the attrition rate based upon the screening criteria.

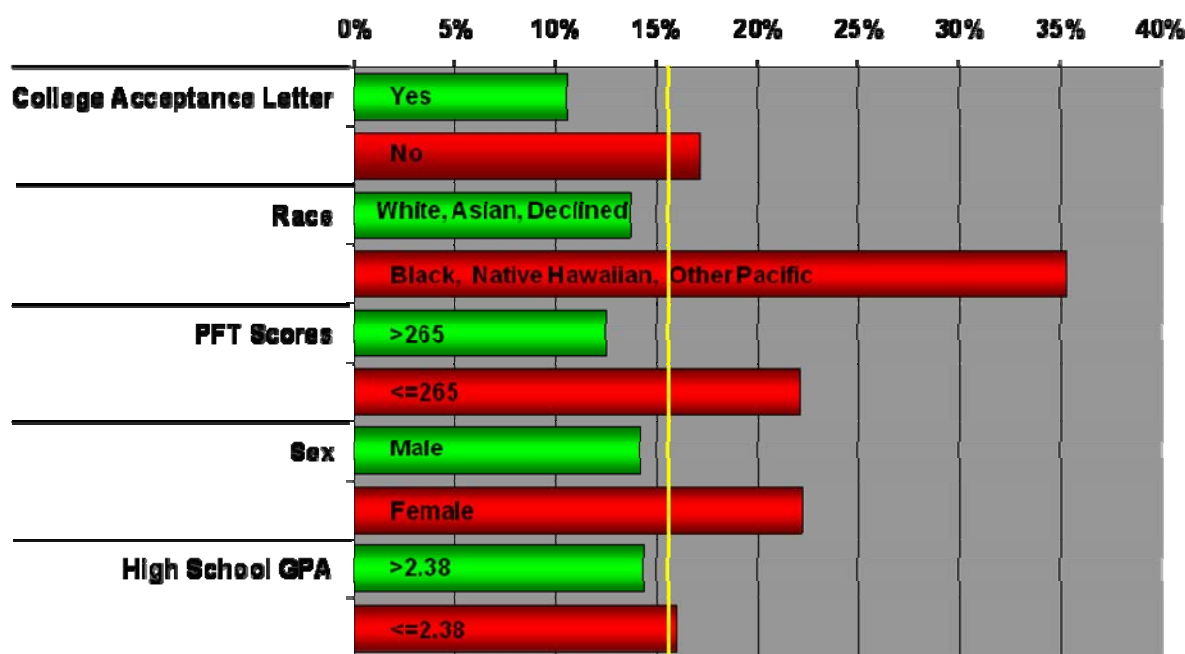


Figure 2-7: Top five discriminators for attrition vs. commission presented in order of Chi Squared Statistic

The number one predictor of success (commission) vs. failure (attrition) is whether or not an individual submitted a college acceptance letter in the MECEP package at selection. The yellow bar represents the average attrition for the entire MECEP population. Those who submitted a college acceptance letter with the MECEP package suffered only an 11% attrition rate in comparison to the attrition rate of 17% of those who did not submit a college acceptance letter. Other notable screening criteria that may influence programmatic changes or could be used on future boards are the PFT scores and the high school grade point average (GPA) of applicants. The PFT score of individual applicants turns out to be the third highest predictor of success. This may surprise some as MECEP is generally associated with being an academic program. However, success in MECEP requires an individual to pass OCS, which is a physically demanding training program that requires a high level of physical fitness. Additionally, a high PFT score may also indicate a high level of self discipline and motivation.



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3 Provide Recommendations

3.1 Order Revisions

The last revision of MCO 1560.15L took place on 16 August 1994. Administrative changes to past 16 years of MECEP boards have been published via MARADMIN on an annual basis. While this is the norm concerning annual boards, dramatic societal, programmatic, and organizational changes have taken place that need to be accounted for within a published Marine Corps order. Since the last revision of MCO 1560.15L, multiple changes to the MECEP program alone have taken place. For example, the BOOST program and the MECEP Prep School have been eliminated. Additionally, many societal changes have occurred to include the re-centering of the National SAT examination, the increase of graduate-level educational facilities on base, and the increase of online college education programs. These changes have affected the academic backgrounds of MECEP candidates. Furthermore, there have been dramatic changes to the minimum time in service (TIS), minimum rank, age, and credit requirements throughout the past 14 years. These changes have significant effects on the MECEP program and need to be accounted for via MCO vs. MARADMIN in future years.

3.2 Programmatic changes

The current programmatic structures of the MCP and MECEP need some adaptations in the near future. Currently an MCP officer candidate has very few incentives to apply for the MCP program compared to the MECEP program. MCP Marines attend OCS and upon graduation attend an NROTC university for approximately 18 months in order to finish their bachelors' degree. Prior to 2002, MCP candidates would attend OCS and be immediately commissioned and then attempt to earn their bachelors degree while in the fleet. While the T2P2 cycle was reduced in the old MCP program (compared to the new program), it also yielded a greater amount of risk because some of the newly commissioned officers were not able to complete their bachelor's degrees in the allotted time, thereby making them non competitive for further promotion. The new MCP program eliminates this risk; however, the T2P2 cycle time is increased as a result. There are no rules that stipulate that a Marine with an associate's degree who is applying for an enlisted-to-officer program must go into the MCP. One of the major points for consideration in this study is that all Marines who are eligible for MCP are also eligible for MECEP. Since MECEP has a longer maximum program length it would make more sense, from the Marine's perspective, to apply for MECEP as the total degree completion time is not limited to 18 months. Rather the Marine may take a normal amount of college credits and graduate in two or possibly three years. Currently, many MCP Marines are forced to overload their college courses, taking more than 20 or 22 credits per college semester in order to complete their bachelor's degrees in the 18-month window⁷. This overloading of college credits prevents Assistant Marine Officer Instructors (AMOI's) and Marine Officer Instructors (MOIs) from utilizing MCP Marines in the same capacity as the MECEP Marines. The MECEP Marines generally have more time to assist in the running of an NROTC unit, assist the midshipmen preparing for OCS, and serve as an indirect recruiting tool for prospective Marine officers due to the length of the MECEP program. Arguably, since the change in the MCP program, which now sends MCP Marines to an NROTC institution, an MCP Marine is, in essence, just a more qualified

⁷ Trip report from MOI Conference (Appendix A)



MECEP Marine. With a minimum college credit requirement instituted within the MECEP program⁸, this statement is truer today than in the past.

It is for these reasons that the study recommends that MCP should be merged with the MECEP program. The inclusion of the minimum college credit requirement within MECEP renders MCP obsolete. Should MCRC decide to pursue this option of combining MCP and MECEP, then a MARADMIN would have to be released identifying the appropriate courses of action for future MCP candidates, which would direct them to apply for the MECEP program instead. With regard to the time required to complete a bachelor's degree, it is incumbent upon the MOI at the NROTC unit where the officer candidates attend to manage their personnel and set reasonable timelines to attain their bachelor's degree.

3.3 Elimination of MECEP Prep

The purpose of MECEP Prep School is not clear. MCO 1560.15L states that the academic regimen of MECEP Prep is to test the Marine's dedication. This is a screening function that makes sense inasmuch as the MECEP Marine will not attend OCS for a year or more. The MECEP Preparatory School 2009 Student Guide, however, states that the primary mission is to "prepare enlisted Marines to succeed academically" while, secondarily, "continuing the screening process for future officers." MECEP PREP, then, has two functions – an academic preparation function and a screening function.

Over the years, potential Marine officers have attended different 'preparatory' schools. The Naval Academy Preparatory School, currently at Newport, RI, is the Navy's fourth oldest school. Its emphasis is strengthening the academic foundation of Marines and Sailors to attend the four-year curriculum at the Naval Academy. The Naval Enlisted Scientific Education Program (NESEP) Preparatory School, no longer in existence, strengthened the scientific background of Marines and Sailors selected to attend a four-year college program in mathematics and sciences. The BOOST Preparatory School, also no longer in existence, focused on raising the academic level of Sailors and Marines to enable them to attend a four-year college program. All of these preparatory schools were established primarily to set up Marines and Sailors for academic success once they arrived on campus.

The difference between MECEP Prep and the other preparatory schools mentioned above is that the other schools were all part of the Navy's education community. They were formal schools. MECEP Prep is not part of the Marine Corps education community. It is not a formal school and it has no permanent home. MECEP PREP is being run on a year-to-year basis. Academic instruction is provided by Marine Corps Reserve officers in an Active Duty Operational Support (ADOS) status. These officers have civilian academic backgrounds. Administration is an additional duty of the MCRC staff.

When MECEP was started in 1973, MECEP Marines attended the NESEP Preparatory School at the Naval Education Training Command (NETC) facility in San Diego, CA. When NESEP was discontinued, MECEP Prep was started as a non-formal course alongside the BOOST Preparatory School at NETC San Diego. When BOOST was discontinued, Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD), San Diego hosted MECEP Prep. When MCRD could no longer provide support, MECEP Prep was moved to Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA, and run on an ad hoc basis.

MECEP Prep is an educational program and MCRC should not have that responsibility. Recruiting and education are separate missions, although complementary. Marine Corps education

⁸ MARADMIN 213/10



programs come under the purview of the Marine Corps Training and Education Command (TECOM). However, TECOM does not view MECEP Prep as a program it should manage. This is not justification for MCRC to continue the program.

Additionally, with the inception of the minimum college credit requirement for MECEP, there is no need to prepare Marines for the academic rigor associated with college life. If a Marine has already proven that they can succeed in college, meaning they have successfully completed college level courses in English and Science or Mathematics⁹ prior to applying for MECEP, then there is no need to further prepare them, in an academic sense, to become a full time student. This will also reduce the overall cost of the MECEP program as the Marine Corps will no longer have to house students and instructors, pay for transportation to and from MECEP Prep, nor have to pay for time and materials of the course itself. Therefore, in the opinion of the analysis team, the decision to eliminate the MECEP Prep program was a valid and fiscally responsible decision.

3.3.1 Knowledge Management Systems

The conduct of this study was limited by the data that could be collected on the enlisted-to-officer population from FY00 and beyond. Unfortunately, a single database that contained all relevant information on the entire population did not exist. Instead, a single database had to be created from a series of different databases residing in multiple locations. MCRISS was supposed to have been the master data repository for all Marines entering into a commissioning program. However, there were many fields that were either unpopulated or contained erroneous data. Fields such as SAT Score, ACT scores, and AFQT scores are all 'professed' scores rather than raw scores derived from official documents. Additionally, erroneous entries in fields such as college credit hours prevented the analysis team from using all the data contained within MCRISS when the analysis team attempted to derive screening criteria for the MECEP. MCRISS cannot be accessed by MOI's at NROTC institutions, which presents a problem with updating fields of individuals currently enrolled in MECEP.

NROTC institutions do, however, have the ability to update the OPMIS, which is a database that resides within NETC. This database contains current and past information on all officer candidates who have participated in an NROTC program to include MCP and MECEP Marines. This database contains not only academic data, but also includes dispositions of students with regard to the program. The dispositions include enrollee status, i.e., if the attritted or were commissioned, and if the participant attritted, it provides a reason why. This information is vital if an analyst is attempting to ascertain MECEP and MCP participant outcomes. This data is also not available in MCRISS. For this reason, it is recommended that MCRC obtain rights to be able to view OPMIS. Additionally, it would make sense to eventually form some sort of data link between MCRISS and OPMIS so MCRC can be automatically populated with current information on enlisted-to-officer enrollees.

⁹ MARADMIN 213/10



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Appendix A Heading 7



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
OPERATIONS ANALYSIS DIVISION
MARINE CORPS COMBAT DEVELOPMENT COMMAND
3300 RUSSELL ROAD
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134-5001

IN REPLY REFER TO:
C 194
20 JAN 10

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

From: Captain Scott Beatty, USMC - MCCDC/OAD Analysis Branch
Subj: MOI CONFERENCE TRIP REPORT

1. Meeting information

- a. Title: Marine Officer Instructor Conference
- b. Sponsor: Captain Adam Scott, USMC - Marine Corps Recruiting Command
- c. Date/time: 12 - 14 January, 2010
- d. Location: NAS Pensacola
- e. OAD Attendees: Captain Scott Beatty, USMC
- f. Other Attendees: MOI's / AMOI's from each NROTC unit; representatives from MCRC, TBS, OCS, NETC, BUMED.

2. Meeting purpose. To discuss current issues involving the Marine Corps Enlisted Commissioning Program (MECEP) and Meritorious Commissioning Program (MCP). Additionally, this conference was attended in order to solicit interviews and opinions of MOI's and AMOI's on the current status of MECEP and MCP students at the various universities around the country.

3. Interviews. Interviews were conducted with MOI's and AMOI's from Penn State University, Norwich, University of San Diego Consortium, Texas A&M, George Washington Consortium, the University of Washington, the Citadel, Utah, Florida

4. General Impressions

a. Quality of Participants. It is a general perception amongst MOI's and AMOI's that the quality of MECEP participants has declined over the past couple of years. MOI's and AMOI's from various universities such as Utah, Norwich and Penn State have noted higher attrition rates in the past two years. The belief is that the quality of individuals being accepted into the program has declined in comparison to years past. The problems that MOI's have been seeing with the MECEP participants cover the gamut of issues to include disciplinary issues, medical issues, and leadership issues. Additionally, there have been complaints that some MECEP participants are entering the program with pre existing medical conditions. These medical conditions prevent the participant from actively training for



OCS and prevent the participant from entering OCS after their first year of college education.

b. Going Native. There is a perception amongst MOI's that MECEP students can "go native" meaning that Marines can begin to act more like a civilian rather than a Marine while being involved in a MECEP program. While most MOI's agree that this is a leadership issue and that it is the commands responsibility to prevent these actions from occurring, there is still exists a perception that this is an issue with the MECEP program. Many MOI's interviewed felt this was due to a reduced quality in MECEP participants in the past few years. However, when questioned about the time periods as to when a Marine may go native, the consensus was that if a MECEP participant was to go native then it was in the latter part of their college career; generally in the participant's 3rd or 4th college year. When questioned as to the reason why, MOI's described how in the first year the MECEP participant is at school they are preparing for OCS. In the participants 2nd year, the recent OCS graduate posses great knowledge as to how OCS functions and their knowledge is fresh; therefore, the MECEP participant is used as a trainer for NROTC midshipmen and new MECEP students. Post that second year however; their knowledge of OCS is not as fresh as those whom have just returned from OCS therefore the third year MECEP participant isn't used as much as to train future OCS candidates. Additionally, the Marine has then been out of the fleet for two plus years and tends to lose some of their military mindset as they are not part of Fleet Marine Force. As this is the perception of MOI's and AMOI's it is interesting to note that the time away from the fleet for a MECEP participant may be an issue; not just because the fleet is missing the Marine for an extended period of time but also because the extended time away from the fleet could cause a Marine to lose the military mindset.

c. MECEP Contribution to NROTC. All MOI's and AMOI's claim that the MECEP participants are a force multiplier to the NROTC unit. The benefits an NROTC Units receives from MECEP participants being aboard are numerous. MECEP participants train future candidates for OCS, provide relevant operational knowledge of the fleet and act as indirect recruiting candidates for Marine Officer Programs. Many MOI's claim that many naval midshipmen see the MECEP's as role models and ultimately decide to change options from navy to Marine Corps based upon their interaction with the MECEP's. While this metric may not be able to be captured in a quantitative metric in this study, as we do not collect this data to date, it is important to note that so long as quality MECEP students are accepted in this program then they can be used as indirect recruiting tools for NROTC units. Additionally, some MOI's are over tasked with the size of their unit, not necessarily with the numbers of candidates/MECEP participants, but due to geography. Some NROTC units are spread out over multiple colleges. The MECEP participants act as trainers at collegiate institution and can be a force multiplier to AMOI's/MOI's.



d. MECEP vs. MCP Contribution to NROTC. When asked about the contribution of MCP Marines vs. MECEP Marines and their contributions towards NROTC Units, some differing opinions emerged. Due to the amount of Marines participating in MCP, there were only a few MOI's and AMOI's that actually possessed MCP Marines within their unit. One of the MOI's interviewed, Captain Downing from Texas A&M, stated that he utilized MCP Marines the same way that he used MECEP Marines. Meaning that MCP Marines assisted in training future OCS candidates and were also used to help run the unit. He states that essentially they were used in the same exact capacity. However, when MSgt Anderson from the University of California - San Diego was questioned about MCP Marines he stated that generally he left them alone to their studies. When questioned as to the reason why this occurred, he stated that due to the timelines for an MCP Marine to finish his degree (18 Months) an MCP Marine sometimes has to take in excess of 20 credits per semester. This is a difficult course load for some Marines to handle and they do not have the extra time to dedicate towards training prospective OCS candidates. Additionally, since the UCSD has over 96 MECEP Marines in the command, the AMOI chooses to employ those Marines instead as they generally have a lighter course load.

e. Age of Participants. One last final comment from a few of the MOI's was in response to the question of the age of MECEP's. Some of the MOI's are of the opinion that Senior SNCO's are too old for the MECEP program. They felt GySgt's and MSgt's are too far into their careers and somewhat less malleable than younger MECEP participants. This opinion was not the consensus but rather a thought by a few MOI's and AMOI's. Looking at this issue a little deeper, it may just be a byproduct of the increased promotion rates that the Marine Corps experienced in the past few years while growing to 202K. Some Marines quickly picked up rank during this time of expansion. This factor will probably be mitigated in the near future as the Marine Corps is no longer expanding at a rapid rate. Additionally, the age limitation on commissioning assists in mitigating this concern in the long term.